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1012 King Street
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October 4, 1982

Doctor Marshall W. Nirenberg
National Heart & Lung Institute
National Institute of Health
Bethesda, MD 20014

Dear Dr. Nirenberg:

I am a teacher living in a small community in western New York. I have no expertise in world affairs, nor any idea how to solve the problems of survival that we human beings face in this century.

But I am troubled by the same thoughts Norman Cousins speaks of in his book HUMAN OPTIONS. He asks, "What basis is there for hope when the human future is increasingly in the hands of men who do not comprehend the meaning of the new [nuclear]power and who are, some of them, puny and fretful and prone to act out of frustration or false pride or mistaken notions of grandeur?"

Since the world seems governed by second-rate minds, my thesis is that the only hope for mankind is to reach the finest minds in the world today as a source of solutions to the direction the world has taken. Unless new and original thinking is done on the relationship of man to the rest of his own species, we are on the road to our own extinction.

Thus, this letter to you. I have discussed with a major New York publisher the idea of a book bringing together the thinking of the finest minds in many fields, worldwide, in a series of essays on the subject of practical ways that we might live together on this planet in relative harmony.

We would be honored if you would contribute your ideas on ways in which individuals and world leaders can begin to turn away from this dark path we now follow. We are not setting any guidelines for you, since we believe that new paths can come only from original thinking. Nothing is too absurd or unorthodox. We are looking to exceptional minds for unique solutions, and feel confident that fresh directions will come from the ideas and thoughts expressed by yourself and others in this book.

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To paraphrase the flyleaf to Jonathan Schell's FATE OF THE EARTH, "This must mark the moment at which man wrenches himself free from the psychological habits of pre-nuclear times, permits the nuclear predicament to take hold in his consciousness, rouses himself to confront the stark fact that his species is in imminent danger of extinguishing itself and begins to act to avert a final, absurd, irreversible, boundless calamity."

Two practical matters: (1) This invitation is now being sent to Nobel Prize winners and those suggested by a few of you to whom I have spoken. We want to be sure to reach a broad range of fine thinkers from all disciplines, around the world. Would you be kind enough to send us the names of four or five people whose thinking you feel should be represented in this book, along with their addresses, if easily available, and an indication of your inclination to contribute, which will help our planning. (2) We hope to begin the editorial process early in the coming year, since the topic is of some urgency. Naturally, contributions will be accepted after that time, but if a tentative deadline of year-end 1982 could be met you would have our heartfelt gratitude.

In short, the future of the world is at stake. I feel the only hope for survival is if people with a gift like yours are willing to put some thinking into possible solutions. An essay from many like you would be a powerful statement to which the world's leaders and all of us can look for rational direction - the next stage in providing a future for our children and their children, instead of leaving another lifeless planet whirling endlessly through space.

In closing, from HUMAN OPTIONS: "All sorts of magnificent notions are at large in the human mind today, and the most revolutionary notion of all is that the problem of human survival is not beyond human intelligence." I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

R.E. Marcus

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